

**Minutes of the Meeting
January 28, 1999**

Projects Reviewed

Downtown Wayfinding Project
The Bon Marche
Madrona Playfield Master Plan

Convened: 8:00am

Adjourned: 1:00pm

Commissioners Present

Rick Sundberg, chair
Moe Batra
Gail Dubrow
Robert Foley
Jeff Girvin
Gerald Hansmire

Staff Present

Vanessa Murdock
Peter Aylsworth
Rebecca Walls

012899.1 Project: **Downtown Wayfinding Project**
 Phase: Conceptual
 Presenters: Jeff Bender, Seattle Transportation
 Paula Rees, Maestri Design Inc.
 Ethan Melone, Strategic Planning Office
 Noelle Million, Seattle Transportation
 Time: 1 hr. (0.3%)

The final recommendations for the Downtown Wayfinding Project have been completed. These recommendations outline the overall organization of downtown wayfinding and destinations, design solutions, and implementation issues.

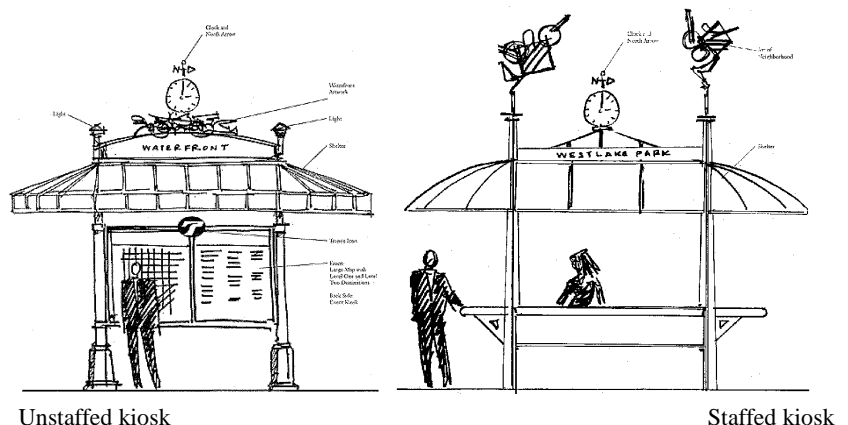
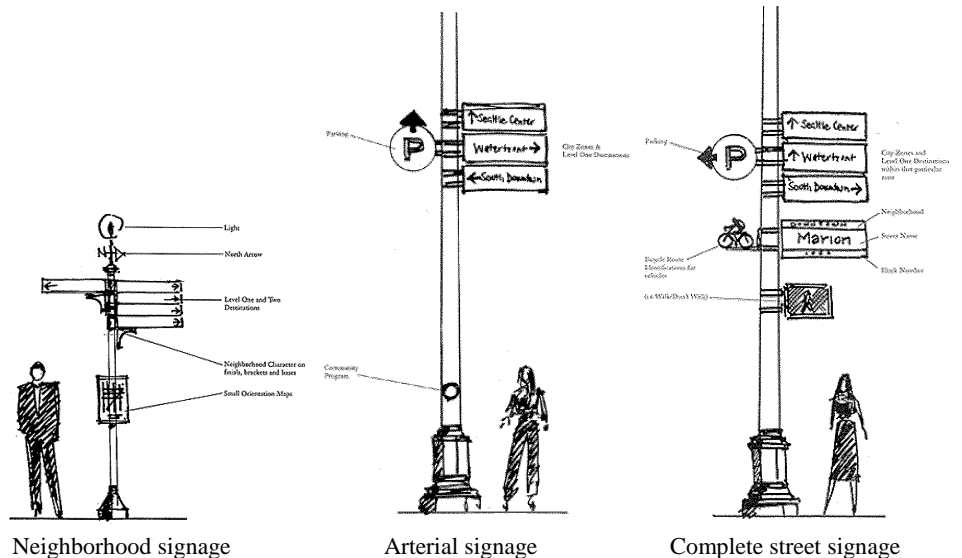
Seattle Transportation has applied for a \$600,000 grant to partially fund the project. Additional funding may be available from the stadium street improvements in South Downtown.

The initial step in developing a downtown wayfinding system will be to divide the city center into four major zones: Seattle Center,

Downtown, Pioneer Square/International Districts, and waterfront. Highway signage will guide visitors to these major zones. Vehicular signage within each zone will guide people to *Level one* destinations. Pedestrian directional signage will be used for *Level one* and *Level two* destinations as well as public transit locations on key pedestrian streets. Staffed and unstaffed visitor information kiosks and neighborhood orientation maps will be placed at major transportation hubs and other key locations.

Additional recommended solutions include the development of a unified transit icon and color-coded routes, design of street identification signs to designate the neighborhood location of a street, and the creation of a modular system of parking and traffic signage.

The comprehensive and coordinated wayfinding and information system will include directional signage, orientation and information, city street signs, neighborhood environmental graphics, and transit signage. Recommended implementation strategies will be related to each of these categories.



Discussion:

- Dubrow:** The project seems to be headed in the right direction. In addition to the major neighborhood identification elements, will there be opportunities to develop neighborhood specific color schemes, materials, and textures?
- Rees:** We will identify those opportunities in the design process. The character, form, and color will probably remain constant, while small details may differ between neighborhoods, although safety constraints may limit those variations. Philadelphia has successful vehicular signage that is not MUTCD standard.
- Sundberg:** I have some concern that the overarching design idea of clear, legible signage may be undermined by neighborhood specific designs. There is enough texture and character within the downtown neighborhoods that signage may need to be part of a city-wide standard.
- Rees:** The neighborhoods are now using additional banners for more individual identity. Is this the city's intent?
- Hansmire:** Wayfinding is more than signage. It includes the ground surfaces and the sequence of spaces within the streetscape. I would like to see a holistic urban design concept for the downtown area that includes a hierarchy of spaces and their character.
- Rees:** Seattle is at a major transition point and needs to determine what its identity should be.
- Dubrow:** This project provides an effective means of guiding citizens to various destinations and amenities. The unresolved issue seems to be how the wayfinding elements provide connections to public amenities and what those amenities are. Is there adequate funding to explore what package of amenities will be necessary to make these connections?
- Bender:** Should we expand the scope of work to include the exploration of public amenities?
- Layzer:** I would be glad to see the scope enlarged to deal with the issue of public amenities. In terms of implementation, I support the idea of a complete demonstration project in one downtown neighborhood. I would suggest that this demonstration project be implemented in the South Downtown neighborhood given the new development and subsequent challenges of wayfinding and nomenclature. I prefer generic terms, such as symphony hall or stadium, rather than specific names. The King County Metro kiosks are a critical link to combine downtown wayfinding with primary transportation points. I also recommend using the 21st century symbols.
- Rees:** We were involved in the development of updated versions of various ADA symbols as in the REI flagship store. In terms of implementation, we have considered a policy of "one in, two out" which would require that more signs be removed than added to reduce sign clutter.
- Dubrow:** Is there a way to leverage the location of the Sound Transit station information kiosks so that they are integrated with the public information and wayfinding elements?
- Layzer:** Absolutely. Sound Transit wants the stations to be part of their communities with relevant information. This is an opportunity for the stations to be integrated within the community.
- Dubrow:** The Light Rail Review Panel (LRRP) may be a venue for addressing this issue in the design guidelines for Sound Transit.

- Batra:** Will the ground plane, access covers, et cetera be considered as part of the wayfinding plan?
- Rees:** Paving patterns and access covers are excellent opportunities to include artists and to explore spatial relationships, patterns, and textures.
- Batra:** Is there any opportunity to fund portions of this project through public—private partnerships?
- Bender:** There are downtown groups that are interested in funding some of the improvements.
- Dubrow:** Is it possible for the mayor to allocate priority matching funds for neighborhoods to implement the wayfinding system as part of their neighborhood plans?
- Bender:** There probably will be money for implementation of neighborhood plans, many of which include signage improvements.
- Dubrow:** Can the removed signs be recycled?
- Moon:** I hope the consultant team is able to involve Seattle Transportation in some workshops to address the major issues of streetscape integration and sign clutter. The current lack of agency integration is a major issue to be resolved.
- Action:** **The Commission appreciates the comprehensive presentation and the continued efforts to expand the project scope to address key issues. The Commission:**
- supports the concept and direction of the project,
 - requests a future review of implementation options once funding mechanisms are established,
 - encourages continued integration and coordination with Sound Transit, Metro, and other private agencies,
 - recommends that city agencies look at developing a package of public amenities that are necessary for Seattle to be a welcoming city,
 - invites Seattle Transportation staff to attend the next presentation to discuss Seattle Transportation issues regarding this project,
 - recommends that the City adopt policies that will emphasize the removal of signs in an effort to reduce visual clutter, and
 - recommends that the project be considered part of an urban design plan for the entire city.

012899.2 Project: **The Bon Marche**
 Phase: Sign Permit Special Exception
 Presenters: Shawn Bowen, Tube Art
 Brian Hopkins, Tube Art
 Tom Polich, The Bon Marche
 David Varon, The Bon Marche
 Bill Wilkins, The Bon Marche
 Time: .5 hr. (hourly)

The Bon Marche is in the process of restoring and renovating its downtown store. The interior will be completely renovated and the exterior, including the canopy, is currently being cleaned and restored. As part of this restoration effort, The Bon Marche plans to install new signs within the stone reveals at each of the four chamfered corners of the building (as shown). The sign design will be based on the signage added in the 1950's after the three upper floors were constructed. The individual letters will be approximately 52 inches in height and three inches in depth with a 1 ½ inch separation from the facade.

The proposal is based on the Sign Permit Special Exception criteria that the sign shows an exceptional effort to create visual harmony with other building elements through a consistent design theme.

Discussion:

- Sundberg:** The sign proposal seems natural and very well integrated with the building facades.
- Layzer:** I agree that the signage is well integrated. The proposal fits the criteria established for sign permit special exceptions.
- Sundberg:** My typical concern is the sign's integration into the building's facade. This proposal is well integrated and the sign is in a natural location. If the sign is removed in the future, there won't be any substantial damage done to the facade.
- Polich:** We conducted careful studies regarding the potential damage to the facade in the process of restoring the building's limestone exterior.
- Dubrow:** I like the proposed signage plan. In the context of our future special exception reviews, we should think about pairing special exceptions with additional pedestrian amenities or wayfinding opportunities. This project meets the current criteria established for the special exception.
- Action:** **The Commission recommends approval of the project as presented. The proposal meets the criteria established for the special exception and listed in the Design Commission Handbook. The sign plan shows an exceptional effort to create visual harmony with other building elements through a consistent design theme.**

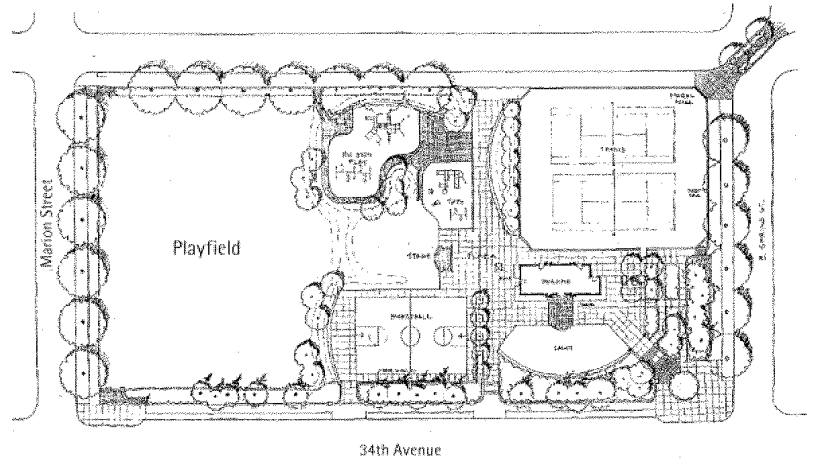


Proposed sign superimposed on photo

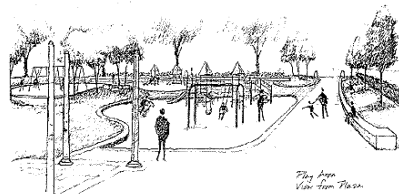
012899.3 Project: **Madrona Playfield Master Plan**
 Phase: Schematic
 Presenters: Randy Allworth, Allworth Design Group
 Pam Kliment, Parks & Recreation
 Time: .75 hr. (N/C)

The Madrona Playfield, originally built in the 1920's, is located between 34th and 33rd Avenues, and East Marion and East Spring Street. The Madrona Elementary school is located to the northwest with an existing diagonal pedestrian connection.

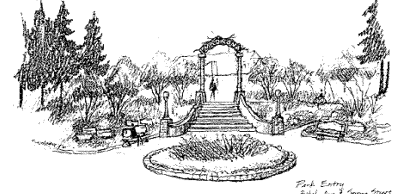
The preferred alternative (shown) was selected by the community at the second of three community workshops. The plan includes an informal playfield, a children's play area, a basketball court, two existing tennis courts, the existing community building, and entry gardens around the northeast entrance. The playfield will have a six or eight foot high perimeter fence, the play area will have a three to four foot high fence and the basketball court will have a low fence or seat-wall.



Site plan of preferred alternative



Sketch of play area



Sketch of northeast entry

Discussion:

- Dubrow:** The entry connection to the Middle School seems underdeveloped. It lacks a sense of threshold or arrival. The diagonal connection seems to dead-end into the tennis court, forcing people to walk around the court to access the park. Additional depth would make a more gracious northwest entry. Is it possible to switch the tennis court with the play area?
- Allworth:** I agree that there isn't enough room to develop a gracious entry. The tennis courts were an important component to community members, even non-tennis players. It gets used for more activities besides tennis. There is an important connection between the play field and the children's play area.
- Dubrow:** The connection could be made between the play area and the gardens at the north end. That arrangement isn't shown in the alternatives.
- Allworth:** Switching the tennis courts and the play area would be a tradeoff of pros and cons. The play area could be connected to the gardens, community building, and

lawns. The high fence around the courts form a large object that would visually divide the play field from the rest of the park.

Batra: Will there be seating provided around the play area?

Allworth: Yes. The seat wall shown around the play area will provide some seating. There will also be benches. We are currently developing the furniture and lighting aspects of the design.

Dubrow: Low lighting integrated with the seat walls would reinforce the intimate scale of the spaces without encouraging nighttime use of the park.

Sundberg: I strongly encourage the use of native plantings wherever possible. How will the community gardens function?

Allworth: The community prefers native plants in the gardens that require little maintenance. They won't be rose gardens or high maintenance plantings.

Sundberg: I suggest pulling the curved seat wall around the lawn through the gardens to formalize the composition and to unify the small gardens. The northwest entry and connection to the school is a difficult issue that needs further development. How many children access the park via that corner entrance?

Allworth: I would estimate approximately 50 to 100 children use that entry during a school day. We conducted a workshop with the school children regarding ways to activate or decorate that entrance.

Dubrow: I recommend that the connection to the school be massaged with minor shifts to the courts or other ways of achieving more depth.

Hansmire: The archway at the school end of the diagonal connection helps increase the sense of threshold. I agree that the arc around the lawn should be extended. The plan seems to be developing nicely, but needs continued refinement.

Layzer: Is there concern within the community that the court space isn't being utilized? Has there been any discussion about removing one of the two courts?

Allworth: We have discussed that possibility.

Kliment: The tennis courts are important to different populations throughout the community. Non-tennis players utilize the courts as paved surfaces for other activities, such as teaching a child how to ride a bike.

Dubrow: Perhaps one court could be removed, some additional space given to the entry sequence, and most of the space retained as hardscape for additional activities within the tennis court area. The northwest entry seems important enough to make some adjustments in the tennis court area.

Layzer: Reducing to one court with most of the hardscape kept for other activities would make sense. I like the reorientation of the basketball court and the buffer zones created around it. I appreciate the use of seat walls and passive recreation. I also agree with the idea of extending the arc around the lawn through the gardens as a formal organizing element. The plantings on the west side of the play will provide nice summer shade and the site terracing is positive. Orienting the gardens and the lawn space reinforces the existing community center building as a major element. The ADA compliant access at the northeast corner nearest the town center is an improvement.

Action: **The Commission appreciates the thorough presentation of the project in design development. The Commission:**

- appreciates the integration of site terracing with park activities and the creation of seat walls that provide passive recreation and artwork opportunities,
- appreciates the reorientation of the basketball court with increased

- buffering and the ADA compliant accessibility from the northeast
- encourages extending the curved seat wall around the lawn through the small gardens as a formal organizing element,
- recommends the use of native plantings wherever possible, and
- encourages further exploration into reducing the tennis court area, to include one court with additional space for alternative activities, as a means of creating a more gracious entry connection to the Middle School.

012899.4 Project: **Executive Director Candidate Forum**
 Phase: Executive Director Search
 Time: 1 hr. (N/C)

The Commission discussed urban design and related issues with a candidate for the Executive Director Position.